



September 2025

THE HISTORY OF THE LITTLE TOKYO HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**MIKE
OKAMURA**



**BILL
WATANABE**

WHEN: Wednesday, September 3rd

TIME: 7PM - 8PM

WHERE: Zoom

RSVP via Eventbrite on CHSSC
website: <https://chssc.org>



Chinese Historical Society
of Southern California

南加州華人歷史學會



Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

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Camaraderie Through the Years

CHSSC met in the Multipurpose room of Castelar Elementary School for 40 years. Winnie Lew and her “crew” would set up a table at the entrance where they offered tea, coffee, and treats. Many people, like Doreen Nakayama and the unforgettable Noel Toy Young, brought tasty homemade goods. People would come early so that they could chat with friends. Over the years we had a wide variety of interesting speakers: authors, educators, and people sharing their personal stories or their family’s stories. Following the meeting, people lingered in the parking lot to have more time with friends. Others went out to eat. Unfortunately, the school district changed policies and wanted to charge over \$600 for each meeting. Consequently, we now meet monthly on Zoom.

Our August picnic provided our first major opportunity for camaraderie at the Heritage and Visitors Center this year. Many people took the time to cook their homemade specialties. Of course, CHSSC provided food from Jade Wok, and Phoenix Bakery provided a large cake. We ate and chatted at long tables in the shade. We saw old friends and made new ones.

Our 50th anniversary banquet is a celebratory homecoming. Since it is a reunion, come early. Enjoy the videos that remind us how we looked when we were young. The photos show the trips that we took, the projects that we worked on, our many program speakers, and, more importantly, the many people who made us who we are today. The reunion gives us a chance to remember old friends who are no longer with us. Of course, it gives us the opportunities to swap stories. Most people have never seen what we have in our archives so we will be setting up displays. Come have your photo taken with friends to memorialize the event.

Our banquet planning team has been efficiently led by Board VP Robert Chong. Due to early ticket sales, the banquet may be a sell-out, so make your plans now. Don’t miss out on the fun, and the warm camaraderie.

Susan Dickson

CHSSC Board Member and Past President

Board of Directors

Officers

Eugene Moy, President
Robert Chong, Vice President
Isaac Chu, Secretary
Anthony Miu, Treasurer

Members at Large

Linda Bentz
David Castro
Susan Dickson
Gordon Hom
Victoria Hong
Angela Lancaster
Susie Ling

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Chinese Historical Society of Southern California, Inc. shall be:

to advocate for a wider understanding of the significance of the role of Chinese and Chinese Americans in the history of Southern California;
to bring together people with a mutual interest in the Southern California history of Chinese and Chinese Americans;
to perform all the functions required to acquire, preserve, and communicate knowledge of this important history;
and
to promote a better appreciation of our rich multi-cultural society.



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Speakers



Bill Watanabe was the founding Executive Director of the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) in downtown Los Angeles. For 32 years, he guided its growth, in conjunction with the Board of Directors, from a one-person staff to a multi-faceted social services and community development program with 150 paid staff, many of whom are bilingual in any of eight Asian Pacific languages and Spanish. Bill retired from LTSC in June 2012.

While at LTSC Bill helped to establish several key service organizations such as the Asian Pacific Community Fund, the National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development, the Asian Pacific Counseling and Treatment Center, the Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking, and the Little Tokyo Community Council. Bill is also the founder of the national Asian Pacific Islander Americans for Historic Preservation (APIAHiP) and the Little Tokyo Historical Society.

Bill has an MSW from UCLA, is married and has one daughter and lives in Silver Lake near downtown Los Angeles. While formally retired, Bill is currently the President of a new project called the Little Tokyo Community Impact Fund, a community-based real estate investment fund aimed to help heritage small businesses in Little Tokyo.



Mike Okamura is a fourth generation (Yonsei) Japanese American and third generation Angeleno. He graduated from USC's Marshall School of Business with an emphasis in International Finance. Following graduation he attended a one-year study abroad program at Waseda University in Tokyo. He began his finance career in Tokyo and upon returning to California after three years he had a meaningful and decades-long career in banking of which he retired from MUFG Union Bank in September 2021. Soon after, he began a part-time job at Azay, a community-focused restaurant in Little Tokyo.

Mike is a 36 year volunteer with the Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo, president of the Little Tokyo Historical Society, Grateful Crane Ensemble board member, long-time member and past president of Montebello-Ashiya Sister City Association, a long-time mentor at USC Career Center's First Generation Mentor Program, and archeological dig projects volunteer at the Manzanar National Historic Site. After the devastation of the Tohoku region of northeast Japan that suffered the massive earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant explosion on March 11, 2011 Mike volunteered in the region nearly every year through his church Altadena Community Church, United Church of Christ. On a study trip in Sept. 2019, the group toured the damaged Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant and the abandoned adjacent towns.

Participants Needed for UCLA study.

This Research aims to investigate lived experiences, feeling of security, sense of belonging and integration of Chinese groups living in Los Angeles. Looking for people: 1) born in China; 2) working as a professional or are an entrepreneur; 3) have lived in Los Angeles for 1 year or more; 4) are between 22-75.

Contact Jasmine Till: jasminetill@g.ucla.edu

Will receive \$30.00 after your interview



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Susan Sing, Mei Ong and
Susie Ling prepare tables for
the picnic.



Beginning the day before, Gordon Hom, Wilbert Lew, Tennyson Kwok, Spencer Cheng, Sam Chow and Tony Miu put up multiple canopies, brought out and wiped down many tables and chairs, while Anita Lee undertook landscape maintenance in front and back yards.

Plenty of Food





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Picnic Fun For All



We were treated to an energetic lion dance performance by youth from Chinatown's East Wind Foundation





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CHINESE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Join us for our
50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
"Saving Our History"
1975-2025

Saturday, November 8, 2025

4:00 pm to 6:30 pm, - Cocktail Reception & Archival Exhibits

6:30 pm to 9:00pm - Dinner & Program

Golden Dragon Restaurant
960 N. Broadway, LA Chinatown 90012

Tickets

Individual Sponsors - \$175

Purchases can be made via our website at CHSSC.org

or you can send checks to:

411 Bernard Street

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Please make checks payable to:

Chinese Historical Society of Southern California

and note "50th Anniversary Sponsorship" in the memo line



Scan to buy tickets





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NOTICE: 2025 Yosemite Pilgrimage CANCELLED (but backpacking trips will continue).

Due to administrative changes and new policy directives from Washington, and the closing of the Chinese Laundry exhibit this season, we will cancel our annual Pilgrimage, which was started in 2013, to discover Yosemite's important Chinese American Heritage. For now, you can read about this history on the official National Park Service website:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/chinesehistory.htm#:~:text=park's%20Chinese%20history.-,Road%20Builders,road%20in%20just%20130%20days>. In

the meantime, we need interested volunteers to help plan new adventures and field trips to historic sites for 2026. Please contact Eugene Moy at ewmoy49@gmail.com.



New sign posted at the closed Chinese Laundry building (and at other Yosemite locations) which reflects new policy to not emphasize cultural history at the national parks

Donations

- Anonymous
- Spencer Cheng
- Jackson Chia
- Jennifer Cho
- Tom Eng
- Locke Foundation
- Sylvia Soo Hoo
- Kenneth Pon
- Little Tokyo Historical Society
- Judy Thang
- Nancy and Jimmy Wong
- Dalia Yedidia
- Donna Young

In Memory Of Calvin Lee

Nanci Lee

In Memory Of Chong Iew

Suellen Cheng Kwok and Munson Kwok

In Memory Of Elizabeth Chan Hoshizaki

Judy Sai



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411 Bernard Street, Los Angeles CA 90012

Community Events

Aug. 28 - Sep. 2 Rock Springs Massacre Memorial dedication and historic site visits.

<https://www.rockspringscommemoration.org/home>

Sept 4 Chinese American Museum's Historymakers Gala at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel

<https://camla.org/29th-annual-historymakers-awards-gala-2025/>

Sept 7, 4pm-7pm, 2nd Hungry Ghost Festival: "Traditions Live, Community Thrive". Alpine Recreational Center, 817 Yale Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012

Sept. 20 Chinatown Service Center 54th Anniversary Fundraising Gala. San Gabriel Hilton

<https://www.cscla.org/54thanniversary>

Oct 4-6 Backpacking trip to Sing Peak, named after Tie Sing, renowned camp cook. Contact co-organizer Dennis Arguelles: darguelles@npca.org

Until Oct. 19 Bowers Museum. World of the Terracotta Warriors New Archaeological Discoveries in Shaanxi in the 21st C. 2002 N. Main St., Santa Ana, CA 92706